

To the Correctional Advisory Committee,

My name is Peter Manfredonia and I have been an inmate at Garner Correctional Institution for 5 years and 6 months. In that time it has become abundantly apparent there is an inmate healthcare crisis taking place. As of March 2025, the annual healthcare costs of the Connecticut Department of Corrections was \$130 million - up 38% from \$94 million in 2023. Still us inmates are provided inadequate care. Nursing shortages have meant inmates do not get medication distributed to them. As someone who takes antipsychotics, antidepressants, mood stabilizers, and blood pressure medication that all require constant timely administration to work properly, this has drastic consequences for me and other inmates who require medication but can only have nurses administer per CT DOC protocol.

Additionally, obesity is proliferating in inmates under the excessively confining restrictions of CT DOC and has effects such as cardiovascular disease, pulmonary disease, diabetes, orthopedic problems, hypertension, and psychological problems are a leading contributor to that \$130 million in CT DOC healthcare costs. To curve the rise in these proliferating healthcare costs, it is necessary to provide inmates with healthier meals, healthier commissary options, and more opportunities to exercise.

No inmate expects to receive a Michelin Star meal, but what we get is caloric rich, nutrient deprived foods. The majority of the food served is carbohydrate dense foods such as oatmeal, grits, and farina for breakfast and rice, potatoes, and pasta for lunch and dinner. This is served with a minimal amount of protein and vegetables - the latter of which are usually prepared inedibly as what we call "rabbit food" because no human would want to eat it. Any reasonable nutritionist not under the purview of the CT DOC would be of the objective opinion that this kind of diet would likely be a direct contributor to obesity and hence the rising healthcare costs associated with it. There are many of us who would like to eat healthier but can't because all of our meals are prepared under unreasonable CT DOC guidelines which do not prioritize nutrition.

Through commissary, inmates are given a wide selection of chips, candies, cookies, and cakes, but few healthy options. Even the healthier options like pouched black beans have 35% of the daily value of sodium - another direct contributor to cardiovascular disease - per serving. We literally can't eat healthy if we tried. There are programs in other States that give inmates significantly more options, the CT DOC is just too punitive to adopt them - even at the increased healthcare and administrative costs it takes to run their restrictive commissary program.

Finally, while a proper diet would greatly contribute to the decrease of the obesity and intimates, exercises another critical aspect for MH to avoid obesity here at garner correctional institution, we get 4 hours of recreation time a day assuming there are no officer staffing issues which has caused us to lose over 100 hours of recreation time in the past year (I have records to support that number and provided them to the ombudsman to hold the CT DOC accountable to the Protect Act). Furthermore, if we go to a program, job, school, religious service, or visit during that recreation time then we lose it. I personally tutor for the GED program which means I lose one hour of recreation time every weekday to help my fellow inmates get a degree. On the housing units, we are not allowed to run, limiting an important form of exercise. We are only allowed access to a gymnasium or ballfield for 45 minutes a maximum of two times per week again assuming there are no lockdowns or obligations during that recreation time. I personally have proposed a running program for inmates to have an opportunity to run more but have been denied by administration.

Inmates want to be healthier, the CT DOC just needs to make it possible for us to achieve it. Doing so would not only be good for the inmates, but ultimately lead to reduced healthcare costs for the CT DOC.

Thank you.